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Diversity & Inclusion: A Critical Islamic Perspective on Agenda 2030 Terminologies

The concepts of diversity and inclusion, while seemingly positive, can carry underlying implications that warrant a critical examination from an Islamic perspective. Agenda 2030, with its emphasis on these terminologies, aims for global development goals that include promoting equality and eliminating disparities. However, the reality of how these terms are implemented can sometimes clash with Islamic values and principles.

---Islamic View on Superficial Application of Diversity and Inclusion

1. Superficial vs. Genuine Diversity:

- An analogy can be made when the Qur'an was raised on spears in the Battle of Siffin and the silent Qur'an was insisted on as the ruler over the spoken Qur'an and an attempt was made to convince the group to follow the Qur'an against Imam Ali, The act of raising the Quran was intended to create a psychological and emotional dilemma for Imam Ali's forces. As Muslims, they held the Quran in the highest regard and were compelled to respect its invocation even in the midst of battle and the analogy of the Khawarij at the battle of Naharwan, who proclaimed "Lahkam illa Allah" (There is no judgment but Allah's), to which Imam Ali responded "Kalmat al-Haq Yarad al-Batil" (A word of truth used to serve falsehood), highlights the discrepancy between noble-sounding rhetoric and underlying intentions. Similarly, diversity and inclusion, while noble in concept, can be used to impose Western cultural norms rather than genuinely respecting natural diversity. The Quran teaches the appreciation of diversity: "And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge" (Quran 30:22). True diversity respects and values different cultures, rather than erasing them.

2. Inclusion and Pluralism:

- Inclusion, when interpreted as promoting all ideas equally without discerning their moral and ethical basis, can lead to the relativism where all beliefs are seen as equally valid. This can undermine Islamic teachings that emphasize the distinction between right and wrong. Islam promotes justice and the upholding of moral values: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives" (Quran 4:135). Therefore, inclusion should not mean the acceptance of all behaviors and beliefs without discernment but should focus on justice and ethical standards.

---Concerns About Western Cultural Hegemony

1. Imposition of Western Norms:

- The concern here is that under the guise of promoting diversity and inclusion, there is a forced adoption of Western norms and values. This can lead to the erosion of Islamic cultural and religious identities. The Quran advises Muslims to maintain their distinctiveness and avoid blindly following others: "And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, 'Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the only guidance'" (Quran 2:120). This underscores the importance of preserving Islamic values in the face of external pressures.

2. Secularization and Economic Utilitarianism:

- The drive towards secularism and reducing individuals to mere economic units undermines the holistic Islamic view of human beings. Islam views individuals as spiritual, moral, and social beings with a purpose beyond material existence. The Quran states, "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Quran 51:56). The reduction of human identity to economic productivity ignores the spiritual and ethical dimensions of life that are central to Islam.

--- Ethical and Moral Boundaries

1. Rights and Boundaries:

- While promoting diversity and inclusion, it is essential to recognize that every community has the right to set its own ethical and moral boundaries. The Quran says, "To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good" (Quran 5:48). This verse implies the acceptance of different communities living according to their beliefs while striving for goodness.

2. Guidance of Prophets and Imams:

- In a world of diverse beliefs and values, the guidance of the Prophets and Imams (peace be upon them) provides a clear path. The analogy of people lost in a jungle, with only a few knowing the way, illustrates the necessity of following true guidance. The Quran emphasizes the role of Prophets as guides: "Indeed, We have sent to every nation a messenger [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid Taghut'" (Quran 16:36). This guidance is essential to navigate the complexities of modern ideologies and maintain a clear moral direction.

---Conclusion

The promotion of diversity and inclusion under Agenda 2030, while well-intentioned, requires a careful approach to ensure it aligns with Islamic values. It should not mean

the blind adoption of Western cultural norms or the erosion of religious and cultural identities. Instead, true diversity and inclusion should respect and accommodate the distinct values and beliefs of different communities, including those of the Islamic faith. Upholding justice, maintaining moral and ethical boundaries, and following the guidance of Prophets and Imams are essential to navigate these complex issues and ensure a balanced and respectful implementation of these concepts.

References:

Here are the references for the article "Diversity & Inclusion: A Critical Islamic Perspective on Agenda 2030 Terminologies":

1. Quranic References:

- Diversity in Languages and Colors: "And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge" (Quran 30:22).
- Standing Firm in Justice: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives" (Quran 4:135).
- Guidance of Allah: "And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, 'Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the only guidance'" (Quran 2:120).
- Purpose of Creation: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Quran 51:56).
- Acceptance of Different Communities: "To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good" (Quran 5:48).
- Role of Prophets as Guides: "Indeed, We have sent to every nation a messenger [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid Taghut'" (Quran 16:36).

2. Historical and Contextual References:

- Battle of Siffin and the Quran Raised on Spears: The historical reference to the Battle of Siffin, where the Qur'an was raised on spears by the forces of Muawiyah, is a well-documented event in Islamic history, highlighting the use of religious symbols for political purposes.
- Khawarij and "Lahkam illa Allah": The event where the Khawarij used the slogan "Lahkam illa Allah" and Imam Ali's response, "Kalmat al-Haq Yarad al-Batil," is also a significant moment in Islamic history, emphasizing the importance of discerning truth from falsehood even when presented in religious language.

3. Scholarly Interpretations and Analysis:

- The references to Islamic teachings regarding justice, ethics, and guidance through the Prophets and Imams are supported by various scholarly works on Islamic jurisprudence and theology. These concepts are foundational in Islamic thought and are widely discussed in classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship.